What Matters? writing competition – Finalists
Each category winner received $350
Each runner up in each category received $200

Judges:
David Owen - Author
Alex Wyld - Writer
Robin Banks – Commissioner Anti-Discrimination

Category 5/6

Winner Georgia Gregory - Year 6 Tasmanian eSchool

Titled: Letter to The Prime Minister

The judges made comment that the presentation of the letter was cleverly interspersed with snippets from the National Anthem and the movie Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea to provide a cogent and empathetic point of view, well supported by relevant statistics and information and well-crafted sentences; all in a clever format.

Dear Ms Julia Gillard,

What are you doing to Australia? Our very own National Anthem extends a welcome to people coming to our shores, not a policy that turns them back!

People worry about refugees taking their children’s jobs, but what they should be worrying about is that many people are risking their lives to get to Australia.

Runner Up Dylan Lonergan - Grade 6 Nixon St Primary School

Titled: Child Abuse

The judges described this essay as very passionately written and argued piece, with strong use of narrative to support the argument.

Six year old Jess wakes up, and as usual she’s bruised and scratched badly, As she walks out to take her rare opportunity for breakfast, she hears banging and clashing, screaming and yelling. It’s her older sister and their father. As soon as their father throws Jess’s older sister out, they exchange whispers in their room. “We need help, but how can we get it?” sobs Jess

Generations are affected when an individual is abused. When someone is abused they are taught something. First, who are our role models? Adults obviously! And if parents, grandparents or for that matter anyone who we may trust abuses us, we’re learning from ‘our role models’.
**Category 7/8**

**Winner Anna Stocks - Year 8 New Town High**

Titled: *Sticks and Stones may break my bones, But words will still hurt me***

The judges believed Anna provided a powerful outline of the impact of bullying with some exceptionally well written sentences:

*School was a battleground where we were outnumbered by kids who thought they were better than us. We felt like books, being judged by the cover. They saw what was on the outside without bothering to read what was inside us.*

*We need to step up against these people. These bullies. We need to show them that we are strong. Because there’s something deep inside that’s made us keep trying, despite everyone and everything that’s been bringing us down. We need to show them that nothing they can do will hurt us. Because we all have people in our lives that care about us. People who would suffer from our loss. Even though that rhyme about sticks and stones may not be true, we need to believe it.*

**Runner Up Mitchell Woolley – Year 8 New Town High**

Mitchell provided an insightful and concise Review of the Welfare System in less than 500 words. His opening paragraph will cause the reader to want to continue:

*“It is my belief that the western sentiment of ‘Money is Power’ is corrupt and hurtful to the poor. It encompasses capitalist desires of oppressing consumers under the veil of Freedom of Business. The idea that money is needed to obtain one’s daily needs is concerning. It is my belief that we should mandate that every man, woman and child are given the provisions to satisfy their needs. Many say that this is already accomplished with our welfare system but many issues are not addressed.*

*I believe that the best system to adopt would be one that gives welfare recipients vouchers for items rather than money. These vouchers could be stored electronically on a card similar to a debit card. The main idea behind this is that the recipient will only be compensated for buying (or paying for) certain items (or services) that would be on a shortlist.*

**Category 9/10**

**Winner Siobhan McDonald – Year 9 Smithton High School**

The intriguing title - *Who would want that?*

Siobhan tackled the issue of underage binge drinking with a strong mixture of narrative, survey data conducted within her school and other statistics, powerfully interwoven to paint very strong messages.

*Underage drinking is a problem noted nationwide. Adolescents and sometimes even younger children have consumed alcohol, with 90% of over 14 year olds having had alcohol at least once. Teenagers need to know the risks involved with underage drinking before they pay the ultimate price. As shocking as it is, 1 in 4*
hospitalisations of people aged 15-24 happen because of alcohol, and 4 Australians under the age of 25 die due to alcohol related injuries in an average week.

**Runner Up Rowena McPhee – Year 9 Reece High School**

Rowena’s piece started and concluded with the words ‘Lest we Forget’ and in-between provided the reader with what the judges described as a very vivid and well-presented overview of the ANZAC spirit evident by Australians in wars across the past 100 years. It was well supported by examples from the NW Coast.

*Ingenuity, courage, loyalty, duty, mateship: these are qualities we associate with the ANZAC spirit. These values are well represented by the soldiers who landed at Gallipoli in the 25th of April, 1915. However, we must also recognise that these characteristics have been evident in personnel in all of Australia’s military engagements. Lest we forget.*

**Category 11/12**

**Winner Ella Bailey – Rosny College**

Titled: *The Media Matters*

Ella outlined the impact of media through some powerful examples.

*Society has countless flaws but if one fault could be changed, it should be to make all branches of media more aware of the effects of their messages. Media influence much of how young people perceive themselves, yet the people accountable for these messages abuse their responsibility. The stress the media can put on adolescents to be attractive is tremendous. It is hard enough already to accept our own individual appearances without the pressures of being shown how far from perfect we really are.*

**Overall Winner**

Overall competition winner, Anna Stocks, a Year 8 student at Clarence High School, has been selected to participate in a Young Writers Forum and attend the NSW and ACT competitions awards ceremony on 29 July 2013 at the Whitlam Institute within the University of Western Sydney.